

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT OUR SHEEP - Ingrid Painter

As Breed Standard Chair of the Navajo-Churro Sheep Association I have given numerous reports over the years stating no changes have been made to the Navajo-Churro breed standard. This standard was taken directly from publications compiled by the Fort Wingate Sheep Breeding Station as a result of research there. The breed standard for N-CSA, still firmly in place today, was formulated in 1986 by the combined efforts of interested parties - namely Dr Claire Terrill, chair of the meetings prior to the establishment of N-CSA and Director at the Fort Wingate Sheep Breeding Station,

Milton and Irma Bluehouse,

Dr Annie Wauneka

Antonio Manzanares, Gumercindo Salazar, Dr Lyle McNeal, Jim Keyes, Connie Taylor, Ingrid Painter, H.P.Jorgensen

and many more shepherds from all over the southwest coming together to develop the Breed Standard N-CSA has today.

As members entrusted to save and perpetuate this historical American breed we have to keep in mind the importance of their ancestry. Even after 35 years of the application of the Breed Standard indiscriminate culling should still be guarded against. Every shepherd has a preference for his or her likes or dislikes.

The breed standard was set up to be inclusive so that as few sheep as possible could be eliminated. Only those that fall into the section of "Unacceptable for Registration" should be culled. Every member should be familiar with this section and know the reason why each of the 14 bullets are there. The team of inspectors should not be failing sheep for reasons other than those mentioned. Inspectors are instructed not to bring in their own preferences or dislikes as this would quickly eliminate some valuable traits.

The Navajo-Churro is not a "cookie-cutter" breed so variations from flock to flock is inevitable and desirable. Those early meetings which brought about the beginnings of N-CSA emphasized the diversity and adaptability of these hardy sheep so spreading them Nationwide would be a good thing.

It is interesting to note that a Suffolk raised in the US is still a Suffolk even though it isn't being raised in Suffolk county of England. The same could be said of Dorset, Hampshire, Shropshire, Cotswold etc etc! Cotswold genetics have been sent back from the US to England to strengthen the dwindling genetics of that breed in the Cotswolds. It is also interesting that breeders on the other side of the Atlantic are grateful that breeders in other parts of the world are perpetuating a breed that has been around since the Romans invaded England some 2,000 years ago. This should be true of breeders all over the US raising Navajo-Churro. We are all in it together striving to keep this truly historical American breed around. We cannot do it alone but as an association it is possible.

Below is an article from the Catch Pen of 2006 which describes the formulation of the Breed Standard and the first flocks in 1989. I believe it is appropriate to reprint it here in order to remind members where we have come from and the progress we have made as an association.

A Brief History of the Navajo-Churro Breed Standard and N-CSA Flockbook

The Navajo-Churro sheep breed standards were established at several pre-organizational meetings for the 1986 Charter meeting followed by setting up the first Board of Directors on July 22nd, 1987.

Day long discussions were chaired by Dr. Claire Terrill who participated in early Ft. Wingate studies for the USDA. Others attending these meetings were:

Milton and Irma Blue House,
Dr. Annie Wauneka, recipient of the President Medal for service for Navajo Health Care,
Antonio Manzanares,
Gumerciendo Salazar,
Dr. Lyle McNeal, of Utah State University,
Jim Keys,
Ingrid and Alan Painter,
Hans Peter Jorgensen,
Connie Taylor,
Maria Verella,
Roger Lowery,
Verle and Lucille Miner,
Wayne Schwindt,
Chris Christiansen,
Bob Davis

and many good shepherds coming together to establish the Navajo-Churro sheep breed standard. All these and several not mentioned influenced the development of the Breed Standard which has not been changed over the past 20 years. The breed standard can be found each year in the annual N-CSA Flockbook. The first Board of Directors was established on 9/21/1986.

The first Navajo-Churro Sheep Association Flockbook was published in 1989 three years after the Association was founded. It was prepared by the American Minor Breeds Conservancy (now the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy) as a service to the Navajo-Churro Sheep Association. By 1989, the N-CSA had registered 373 sheep and the membership had risen to 56. Membership and registration fees remain the same today as in 1986 and applications are still mailed to Connie Taylor or Ingrid Painter (thanks ladies!). Here's a list of the Foundation Flocks listed in the **Navajo-Churro Flock Book I – 1989**.

Alan & Ingrid Painter, **PUDDLEDUCK FARM**, WA (now OR), flock established 1975
Navajo Sheep Project, **UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY**, UT, flock established 1977
Hal Hamilton, **HAMILTON MEADOWS**, WA, flock established 1977
A. Christiansen, **TWO CREEK RANCH**, ID, flock established 1980
Laurelen Stearns (now Jabbour), **SUNSET CORRAL**, OR, flock established 1981
Connie Taylor, **CERRO MOJINO WOOLWORKS**, NM, flock established 1981
Ben & Nancy Priest, **EL CHURRO COLORADO**, CO, flock established 1984
H. Peter Jorgensen, **CS FUND**, CA, flock established 1985
Alexa Morrison, **MORRISON**, CA, flock established (not given)
Krista & James Botsford, **WINDSPUN FARM**, NE, flock established 1985
Tanya Charter, **MCKENZIE CREEK RANCH**, CA, flock established 1985
Roger Lowry, **CASTLE VALLEY NAVAJO-CHURRO SHEEP**, UT, flock established 1985

Van and Janice DeMille, **DESERT TAPESTRY'S COUNTRY COVE**, UT, flock established 1986

Dale Swartzentruber, **ESTOUTEVILLE FARM**, VA, flock established 1986

Sharon Jones, **JONES**, WA, flock established 1987

Joe McCummins, **LA PURISIMA MISSION STATE HISTORICAL PARK**, flock established 1986

David & Lani Kyea, **KYEA FLOCK**, NM, flock established 1987

Bill & Charlynn Long, **ALKALI VENTURES**, CA, flock established 1988

Lynda Prim, **HIGH DESERT**, NM, flock established 1988

Donaldo Roybal Family, **RANCH LAS LAGUNAS**, NM, flock established 1988

Frances L. Stearns, **SOLANA**, NM, flock established (not given)

Of these first flocks only four of them are still in existence but many new ones have been established. Without the flocks which have been in Navajo families for many generations the association would never have been established. It is my sincere hope that the sheep will continue into the future.

*The Navajo-Churro breed standards can be found on the Navajo-Churro Sheep Association website at navajo-churrosheep.com